Human Transformation Independent
of Knowledge and Time
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Some twenty years ago I was privileged to be invited by the world renowned spiritual teacher, Jiddu Krishnamurti, to undertake with him a series of video-taped dialogues. Their object was to bring forward the kernel of his teaching. In essence he taught that each human being is responsible for bringing about his or her own transformation, which is not dependent on knowledge or time. In another context he wrote in his own hand that "The core of Krishnamurti's teachings is contained in the statement he made in 1929 when he said 'Truth is a pathless land'."

These two statements, namely, that one's own transformation is independent of knowledge and time and that truth is a pathless land are most intimately related. Though on first glance they seem markedly distinct, nonetheless these statements are inseparable. On perceiving the reciprocal union of these two statements, one glimpses the ~~[illegible]~~ undivided

nature of genuine spirituality.

Spirituality and wholeness are are also inseparable but the splendid word, wholeness, has in recent decades fallen on miserable times. It is used by many now to express the goal of growth techniques and methods by one or another party with a program to sell. This misuse of the word has provincialized the concept and turned it into a catchword that divides rather than heals. But this fine word can be rectified and restored to its proper usage if it is reunited to spirit instead of being left naked to the agendas of traditional and popular psychologies. This hard remark provokes the question of the meaning of ~~the~~ each words, spirit and wholeness. I hope the progress of this paper will begin to disclose their meaning until at the conclusion of this essay I shall attempt a formulation that perhaps will help restore the words to their home ground.

The topic of this paper does not lend itself to the usual academic approach of research that leads to erudition. On the contrary it does not move by adding one thing to another whether by information or analyses. It moves not by addition but by subtraction; it seeks not more but less. This is because it labors in the field of self-inquiry

Authentic self-inquiry has received little attention throughout the long stretch of recorded human history. This is because genuine self-inquiry is independent of both outward and inward authority — the outward being the imposition of political and economic constraints and the inward being the tyranny of ideas and the stream of consciousness that flows from them and feeds them.

Outward authority is easily recognized, the police state is its crudest form. Inward authority is much more subtle. It is a psychological self-bondage. To make matters worse, it harbors an ambivalence. ~~On the one hand~~ It lets itself be dominated by scientific, philosophical and religious ideas which it receives at second and third hand yet at the same time it intellectually and emotionally drugs itself into a virtually substance dependency on ~~scientific~~ these ~~philosophical and religious~~ ideas and ideals. A principal mark of psychological self-bondage is that these ideas and ideals are ~~contemplated in abstract only~~ while in their fancied modes of truth, goodness and beauty are contemplated in abstraction only. Embodying them in real life is shunned like the plague, moral and spiritual

~~courage~~ cowardice are endemic to our species whereas physical courage is demonstrated in one form or another everyday. As for moral courage, who among us is ready to stand alone against a majority of our fellows. As for spiritual courage, who among us is ready upon the instant to die the psychological death to our very imagined self-identity without which there can be no self-liberation?

These questions cannot be answered collectively by common consent nor by meanderings among the denizens of the so called collective unconscious. They can be answered only by the individual by myself alone and unaccompanied. Genuine self-inquiry realizes which this groundless ground is virgin, uncharted, pathless and unimagined. One's persona disappears into this unthought and nameless emptiness for this emptiness is reality and reality is neither an event nor an experience.

These words are unintelligible to ~~the persona~~ so long as the persona is mistaken for the self. Self-inquiry reveals the persona as an ephemeral phenomenon of the self. To put the matter loosely, while the me is mistaken for the I

The words in the previous paragraph will remain enigmatic and for some, plain gibberish. This is why pure self-inquiry has received little attention throughout the long stretch of recorded human history. That level of human transformation which is independent of knowledge and time is not realized outside of self-inquiry and for that reason it remains a rarity.

At this point in our discussion it is necessary to point up that fatal misconception which holds that self-inquiry and introspection are one and the same. This misunderstanding arises out of a failure to discern that the inward world of motives, moods, feelings and wishes is equally external to the ego as is the outer world we see, hear, touch, smell and taste. On grasping the centrality of the ego and its standpoint one is in a position to give both the outer and inner worlds their due. It is from this base and standpoint that most of the higher products of culture in the arts and sciences spring in all their ideality and beauty. Their ideality stretches indefinitely into the past while in the present artistic and scientific ideality anticipate the novel future

Unfortunately, the egoic standpoint does not overcome the illusion that the ego is an independent substance in being. This illusion generates the force of the twin concepts, personality and experience. These two concepts, personality and experience, underpin the theoretical structures of theology, philosophy and depth psychology. Even the transpersonal psychologist concerned to study the common root of personality is still faced with the question ultimately of what and who are my client and my colleague. What and who is the agent who interprets the clinical data awaiting diagnosis?

Only intelligence is required for self inquiry and not any of the games of intellect which impose their rules of dogma, doctrine, ways and means, method and scope. Houses as these are within conventional interpretations and social structures they are rarely studied for their power to disclose their roots. Such reach down into the subsoil of primordial wisdom. Historically, those few who have touched this wisdom have most often paid dearly for it. Witness in the western tradition the executions

of Jesus and Socrates.

If not in league with the ego's standpoint, what is the character of that intelligence which attracts, supports and illuminates pure self-inquiry? This question and the question of the self are inseparable for when they are studied with a pure act of attention they reveal that the ego so far from being at the center of the self is as external to it as the world of the five senses and the internal world of thought, will and feeling. They are the worlds of body and some and the self cannot be reduced to either or both of them.

The latter has seen a growing enthusiasm for the religious thought of the ego's South Asian and Far Eastern traditions. It is almost as though the far-ranging investigations and discoveries of the nineteenth century are being answered this century from the east. The dialogue that this phenomenon ~~[illegible]~~ ~~helps to~~ stimulates ~~[illegible]~~ investigates what there is of authentic spirituality in our own western tradition.

It will not ~~offend~~ Krishnamurti's spirit if in this meditation ~~[illegible]~~ I refer to scriptural passages ~~from~~ our own western

tradition and from others. In our eighteen video-taped conversations I quoted a number of scriptural references from various cultures. He never once objected to this practice. Rather, he objected to the misuse of sacred texts. Unless one risks the living out of whatever there is of truth in such texts, they remain a meaningless clutter of so called knowledge, a heap confined in the past and in no sense an occasion for present self-awakening. Psychological knowledge is what is meant here and not practical know-how which is knowledge of a different order.

Plato's virtual transcription of Socrates' Apology remains one of clearest invitations to self-inquiry in our western tradition. Just before his judges render the verdict that will execute him Socrates says, "an unexamined life is not worth living." In the text he includes his own life in this. In saying that an unexamined life is not worth living he necessarily invites the question: who is the examined and the examiner? If it is my life that I am examining, where do I, the examiner leave off and my life as object begin? Or, looked at from the standpoint of my life, the examined, where does my life leave off and I, the examiner begin? Furthermore, where does my life leave off and

the life of another and others begin? I am not raising these questions for the sake of mystification or as a shrewd rhetorical device by which to benumb a critical focus. On the contrary, if one sets with them quietly they open out upon a crucial distinction between the orders of attention, one we give to physical and technical matters which require a change of position in temporal or spatial objects, the other we give to attitudes which we take for granted in relating unconscious one's lust for security and a settled life. It is this latter attention which obtains property while one is examining one's life.

Only such a non-utilitarian attention can reveal how it is the case that human transformation is independent of knowledge and time.

Let us examine the possibility of such a transformation through contemplating the relation of knowledge to time, of understanding to timelessness and of not-understanding to timing. As we look into these the meaning of the topic of this meditation might come clearer as well as the characters of spirituality and wholeness.

The English word, knowledge, is etymologically somewhat obscure, however,

what seems fairly certain is that it derives from Middle English. There is that form it meant to ~~a~~ admit, confess. The element of confession gives the word a certain religious aura which confers upon it a high seriousness. An anterior etymology relates knowledge to note' whose main sense is Latin nota, a brand, a mark by which one recognizes what is at hand. These two etymological roots lends the word 'knowledge' a high respect and a degree of permanency.

Both these characteristics of the word point to the ease with which the concept ~~[illegible]~~ 'knowledge' has attained to its eminence.

The word's relation to time is clearly on the side of the past since what bears a mark has already been branded. The bearer of the brand is easily reduced in the mind to a tool for stamping the mark, as the mark is all important for identification; yet it remains an abstraction. As an abstraction it has the power to last well beyond the existence of its bearers. This seemingly magical property so enhances its dignity that it is easily forgotten that the mark, as such, is of the past and to fix the mind upon it

imagining it an authentic creature of the present is to misunderstand oneself and the mark also.

These remarks do not apply to the practical order where the uses of memory are absolutely necessary. One could not drive a car, wash dishes, get to work or operate the most sophisticated instruments without the uses of memory, let alone undertake prodigious reckonings in the calculative order.

On the contrary, I refer here to the matter of attitude, i.e. whether the measure of my present living is a mark from the past to which I am attached or whether my attention is one of listening and looking without attachment. One of the keys to how knowledge can and almost certainly does govern attitude is furnished by our word recognition. To recognize is to know again. We cannot recognize what we have not known before. This is crucial for our emotional relation to symbols, dogma and structures since all these relate so intimately to our belief structures. These structures we impose upon the present with whatever violence we feel necessary and appropriate to make the present in every particular

continuous with the past. Any break in this dreary chain we interpret as a threat to where and how we are in the world. This species of fear is one of the principal causes of continuing religious and political violence ~~persecution~~ the world over, to say nothing of neighborhood and domestic conflict ~~violence~~. These are only some of the symptoms of reactionism, a universal and endemic human disease. To probe ~~[illegible]~~ this phenomenon more deeply would require a keen examination of the abuse of imagination in which fantasy is mistaken for fact. It is enough for this paper to ~~take~~ ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible] reactionism for the deadly disease that it is.

The seminal Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, has put this succinctly in his <u>Meditations on Quixote</u>. He wrote this paradoxical formula, "the death of what is dead is life. There is only one way to dominate the past, the realm of things that have perished: to open one's veins and inject some of one's blood into the empty veins of the dead. This is what the reactionary cannot do: treat the past as a form of life. He pall it out of the sphere of vitality, and, though it is dead as it is, he places it on its throne so that it may rule over our souls." Even

though Ortega is here describing what he took to be a cultural tendency of Spain to set up what he called an oppressive "oligarchy of the dead" his image is exact for our own personal misuse of memory. Our inveterate habit of superimposing upon the present an image from the past is devastating to interpersonal relationships since it deprives us from meeting the other with a fresh and innocent eye. Before we are aware of it, the experience of our first encounter with the other converts to a belief and from then on each new experience with the other is reduced in our mind to that belief. Such an attitude and conviction are lethal to understanding and leave us perennial prisoners of time, cemented in the past.

There is a distinction between knowledge as static and knowing as dynamic which points a way out of ~~the~~ this bondage. Knowing is a movement free from slavery to its source. Within knowing we can distinguish three orders: knowing which serves the practical order, knowing which is accumulative, additive and increases the store of static knowledge. Thirdly, there is knowing which is non-accumulative,

non-adective which moves through each present instant taking in the unprecedented as that is disclosed to it without beginning or end. Here the mind contemplates its object without imposing upon it any agenda whatsoever.

There is a remarkable text in St John's Gospel which, when translated strictly from the Greek, discloses this this untrammeled way of knowing: "This is eternal life, that they should keep on knowing thee the only true God...." I am not concerned in the implicit theology of this text. It is the phrase, "that they should keep on knowing...." which arrests attention in the context of this meditation. Here, the verb "to know" is in the present active subjunctive. The subjunctive is a mood expressing potentiality; the present tense indicates an ongoingness.

The term, eternal life, joins two words that seem mutually exclusive. Classically, eternity has meant timeless existence, i.e., existence without change. This is not the same as infinite time or endless duration. Eternity is the ever abiding now without respect to any then or when, any past or future. However, life,

as we ordinarily understand it, is subject to time. For the individual or the collective life comes to be and passes away. The life of a thing has a beginning a middle and an end, a life cycle. Finite existence which is existence subject to change endures a temporal career. Then what can eternal life possibly mean for a mortal existence. Our text, if contemplated deeply, will generate this question.

The unprecedented in every instant is the home of the eternal. The unprecedented has no antecedent. It is the absolute new as distinguished from what is novel. The great Danish thinker, Kierkegaard, defined the instant as an "atom of eternity." This implies that ~~A moment~~ it cannot be one moment among others in the temporal chain of cause and effect. The Buddha, noting the circularity of cause and effect, observed that if there is only cause and effect then there cannot be the liberation of self-awakening. Self-awakening is an instantaneous leap out of causalism into a sphere unmodified by the uses of time.

We are now in a position to contemplate the seemingly contradictory terms, eternal-life. Even though the sphere into which self—

awakening leaps is not contaminated by time; it nonetheless irradiates and redeems it. This being so, eternal-life is realizable now, upon this present instant of self-awakening. Eternal-life is not limited to a beginning after death but as eternal it is ever present and as life it is now. Self-awakening is not a gradual illumination as though we were lifting a shade within a darkened room. Self-awakening suddenly, instantaneously sees the intrinsic light of one's own being where before there was only darkness caused by the blindness of self-misunderstanding.

When Jesus prays to his Father in heaven, saying "This is eternal life, that they should keep on knowing thee ...." he points up that nothing of this knowing can be reduced to the known. This knowing is ever a fresh, unprecedented, free from the duality of the knower and the known, experiencer and experienced, controller and controlled. One keeps on awakening to it that there is no separation and division since, in the words of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj, "Nothing was divided and there is nothing to unite." Knowledge which is in bondage to time no longer hinders knowing which keeps on leaping into the

into the sphere of the abiding, the ever present now.

Every language contains certain words which are particularly strong in their power and compass to disclose what they express. The English word, 'understand', is one of these. ~~Had~~ Its ~~clearly distinct it is~~ clear distinction from the word knowledge is sharply brought forward in the words of an old African wise woman who remarked: "The white man knows a very great deal but doesn't understand anything." She put her finger on the heart of the word. The English word 'understand' denotes not only a work of intellect ~~intelligence~~. It includes also a response from the heart. It embraces a dual meaning. On the one hand, to understand is to comprehend, to discern. On the other, it includes empathy, sympathy, the resonating of one heart to another precisely as the others uniqueness is intuitively embraced. These features of understanding are open to intelligence but closed to calculative reason. Whatever intellect can abstract from these affections cannot stand in for their concrete expressions; so, one can say to another, "yes, it is the case that you know all about me but what really matters is that you

understand me." At that point, unless I am mistaken in the other, a gentle peace suffuses our mutual presence, and, as we say, we understand one another.

The duality in unity in the word understand lies deeper than the distinction within it between a matter of the head and the heart. Quite simply, the word means to stand under. To stand under comprises the counter-motion of a simultaneous movement both upward and downward. Stand has for its root the Indo-European *sta, to hold oneself upright. The human person and the tree have in common that each stands at 90° to the earth that supports it. This geometrical relation, through no fault of its own, contributes to the human psychological illusion that each of us is the center and pivot of his or her natural world. But even freedom from this egoic self-deception cannot change our human necessity, namely, that we are counter-directed between the movement upward by which we stand and the movement downward that roots our posture to its base. Further, the borderline between these counter-tendencies

is not geometrical. It exists vibratively, waveringly and, to an obstinate perspective, even ~~waveringly~~ waywardly.

As this is so for the body, how much more so is it for the psyche. The soul is stretched between its desire to exist more loftily and that lowly equanimity which does not try to go beyond where it cannot yet begin. The foolish illusion that one is the center of the universe can be dropped but not this counter-tension which is a permanent feature of our human nature. Unlike the spirit which has no agenda, the soul must awaken to the counterplay between exaltation and humility. These are almost universally misconceived, exaltation as prestige and humility as humiliation.

Even when exaltation and humility are understood in their correct relation in which humility is the exaltation, the soul's counterpoise still obtains since the health of the spirit is always critical always at risk, instant by instant. "The sage is not sick because he is sick of being sick; ~~[illegible]~~ this is the secret of of health" says Lao Tzu (71).

Since this structure of our nature abides without change, it is a matter of